

Filosofijos istorijos tyrinėjimai

HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF PRACTICAL REASON

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Abstract. *This research paper offers an analysis of Husserl's early theory of action in its two forms – as the scientific ethics and theory of values and as the phenomenology of will. The author focuses his attention on two issues: the issue of parallelism between logic and ethics, and the issue of how independent Husserl is in his comprehension of ethical issues and elaboration of the idea of practical reason from the conception and methodological premises of transcendental phenomenology – or, on the contrary, how dependent he is on those premises.*

Keywords: *parallelism between logic and ethics, practical reason, life-world, scientific ethics, formal axiology*

Idea of Parallelism between Logic and Ethics

Upon the publication of *Logical Investigations (LI)*, Edmund Husserl became famous as the founder of pure logic and the phenomenological theory of knowledge. This was connected with the history of publication of Husserl's manuscripts on practical philosophy to a great extent. Although Husserl's interest in this field awoke already when he was a student of Franz Brentano, and although he made the first attempts of independent studies in this field as early as 1889/90, his numerous manuscripts on ethics remained unpublished for 100 years. The publication of *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre* (1908–1914) in 1988 marked

a new stage in the conceptualization of Husserl's phenomenology. However, as those lectures as well as a number of articles published in the XXVIIth volume of the *Husserliana* demonstrate, the idea of phenomenological substantiation of ethics and elaboration of the concept of practical reason had interested Husserl long before writing *LI*, and it can be considered as one of the central topics overarching the whole timespan of his creative work. And this means that in Husserl's phenomenology there are motives and intentions which support the significant revision of the customary interpretations of Husserl's phenomenology as a discipline engaging exclusively in resolution of theoretical, mostly epistemological, issues.

Two periods can be identified in the history of development of the phenomenological concept of ethics. The first period includes the early works of the 1890s to 1917. The second period is connected to elaboration of the *concept of life-world* in the works from 1914 onward. I will examine the first period connected to the elaboration of *scientific ethics* in more detail.

The project of scientific ethics is based on Husserl's thesis about parallelism between logic and ethics, according to which "...the theory of knowledge, or criticism of theoretical reason, corresponds to criticism of practical, value-judgment reason in general" (Husserl 1984: 381). At the same time, although Husserl focuses on ethics, he understands his task in the broadest sense.¹ Ethical experience and ethics are an exemplary ground for phenomenological analysis of formal *a priori* principles based upon the practical human living. For practice or practical objective sphere which must be "extracted" as a result of phenomenological research, Husserl applies the term "formal theory of practice": "...to logic, understood in the limited and defined sense – as formal logic – in parallel to it formal *a priori* practice must correspond" (Husserl 1988: 3). In its turn, the idea of *formal theory of practice* implies the existence of formal *a priori* discipline – *formal axiology* (Husserl 1988: 4, 47). It is notable that axiology (the study of value) should study formal theory of practice. The conceptions of value and value system acts play the major role in

foundation of scientific ethics and Husserl's practical philosophy as a whole. Value is understood by Husserl in its broadest sense – as ethical, aesthetical, volition value – and practical reason is identified with axiological reason: "Valuing reason should be understood in the broadest sense, not only, for instance, as aesthetical one" (Husserl 1988: 4). According to Husserl's idea, a new discipline should be created – "complete ethics" (*volle Ethik*) which includes logic, axiology and any other possible disciplines exploring practical human activity (Husserl 1988: 3ff).

It is pure (formal) axiology which should become the analogue of pure logic. In this connection, a question arises about the specificity of interrelation between the principles of logic, i.e., the principles of theoretical reason, and the principles of practical reason. On the one hand, Husserl emphasises the priority of pure logic. In the methodological aspect, logic stands as "the clue" (Husserl 1988: §8) owing to which it is possible to approach "the last source of analogies" (Husserl 1988: 62) between emotional and cognitive acts and to trace the essence of universal reason which reconciles theoretical and practical activities. On the other hand, however, pure ethics and pure logic are formally incommensurable disciplines. Ethics is of a historical character, and it is connected with *material* historical contexts and regularities. In contrast to this, logic is non-historical and formal. This difficulty was realised by Husserl from the very beginning, and it was the most considerable obstacle to finding the fundamental analogy between logic and ethics (Husserl 1988: 38). It is noteworthy that Husserl understands disciplinary difference between logic and ethics similarly to Kant. Logic is

¹ Cf.: "How must I organise my life and my intentions reasonably, how could I avoid painful duality of myself, how could I avoid the censure of my neighbors? How could I give beautiful and goodly features to my life, and according to traditional phrasing, how could I achieve genuine eudemonia and genuine felicity?" (Husserl 1988: 11).

governed by such principles which analytically contain all other logical principles, and it is not able to provide the positive answer to the question about truth in any *possible* spheres of knowledge. Truths deduced by logic are of *analytical* nature. In contrast to logic, ethical principles are of *synthetic* nature. The major goal of ethics is to provide the positive answer concerning any specific act (the weather is good or bad) in the context of any *possible* practice. Hence, the issue of parallelism can be resolved by finding its formal, *a priori*, and analytical component in ethics. This component could be discovered in the experience as well as in the scientific conceptualisation of this experience. *Since Husserl treats experience of ethical acts (practice) and logical thinking (theory) as the experience of actualisation of the relevant intentional acts, the thesis of parallelism between logic and ethics would be proven if analogy was established between the intentional structures of emotional and cognitive acts.*

The moment of objectivation became the real sticking point while Husserl determines parallelism of the intentional structures of emotional and cognitive acts. In his 1908/1909 lectures on ethics, Husserl proves that value-judgement acts are not themselves objectivising acts but they are based on such acts (see Husserl 1988: § 5, 12). Correspondingly, since the object is constituted in logical acts of assertion, axiological predicates are founded in logical ones: “We talk about values only insofar there are objects that are of value” (Husserl 1988: 255). That is, in identifying value predicates, the object performs the role of an “extreme premise” (Husserl 1988: 255f). At the same time, Husserl admits that the conception of “value” is more multivalent

than correlates of logical acts: “The word ‘valuable’ is multivalent; it changes its meaning according to the aspect anybody is applying to define something as valuable and according to the way we name matter (of valuating acts – A. L.)” (Husserl 1988: 89). Hence, Husserl draws on two problematic aspects: the specific role of acting subject and content, i.e., the intentional matter of valuating acts. The person who estimates the value of any object plays the crucial role in the axiological sphere, while she also shapes the perspectives of object consideration and draws value accents. In logic subjectivity or personality is usually effaced.

The difficulties in defining the specific nature of the matter of valuating acts are so clearly seen when the analogy between the theoretical and practical (axiological) perception is established. Thus, perception is understood as experience which ascertains the results of theoretical cognition and confirms relevance of practice: “Something similar to perception, an analogue of perception should be found when the values immediately beheld are given in beholding; and necessary foundation should be found for statement of values in judgment. Thus, perception convinces and grounds value judgment as well as judgment about things finds its ground in perception. The act of contemplation (*Anschauung*) has to find its place as abstraction finds its foundation in contemplation only or corresponding to it the act of contemplation in fantasy (*Phantasieanschauung*) which offers us universal value concepts” (Husserl 1988: 281). It is difficult to establish the analogy between the theoretical and axiological experience of perception because it is not evident how specific value constituent of value

acts (“matter as axiological content and its axiological quality” (Husserl 1988: 89)) is constituted, and value is understood as objectivity, that is value as such but not as an attribute (predicate) ascribed to any object (Husserl 1988: 277, 281). Finally, Husserl is forced to determine essential differences at the level of subject spheres. They are not deducible from the structures of intentional acts. In the 1908/09 lectures, Husserl assumes such model of intentionality as elaborated by him in *LI* and *Ideas I*, but then it becomes evident to him (especially during his elaboration of “phenomenology of will”) that the way of intentional direction of emotional acts (volition, wish, etc.) differs a lot from intentional direction of perception and judgment. Even if we admit that acts of perceptual objectivation are based on emotional acts, their intentional objective correlates will be different: values as axiological objects are used for comparison, but truths as logical objects are not. *Value circumstances (Wertverhalte) implied in valuating acts and significant in the axiological sphere are not analogous to their content, i.e., intentional matter, to circumstances (Sachverhalte) implied in the acts of perception and judgment which are significant in the sphere of logic.* Thus, in the 1908/09 lectures, Husserl singles out values as a separate, independent object region, another dimension of being (Husserl 1988: 283, 340). It is for this reason that Husserl defines value-judgment assertion not as a result (in the sense of logical conclusion), but as a *product*.

Those difficulties motivated seeking a new argument for logical-axiological parallelism. In his 1914 lectures on ethics, Husserl advances a thesis according

to which doxical acts (beliefs) stand as the common foundation of two forms of reasonable activity: theoretical cognition (logical) and practical (axiological) (Husserl 1988, 59). Parallelism now means that doxical and emotional reasons are mutually entwined, and thus “any value judgement... can be transformed into a cognitive attitude connected with performing the judgement” (Husserl 1988: 63). The founding role of logical reason is not directive but internally necessary in view of the fact that “axiological reason ... is, so to say, concealed from itself” (*ibid.*) and becomes accessible only due to cognitive elements implicated in the structure of emotional acts. A logical reason, in its turn, is also dependent on axiological reason since “cognition does not invent its object but only discovers what, in a certain sense, already exists” (*ibid.*). Thus, formulating the idea of parallelism (analogy) between logic and ethics – the key idea for phenomenology of practical reason – Husserl proceeds from the assumption that cognitive (logical) intention is not brought into emotional acts externally but is inherent to them, i.e., it is their own essence (*ibid.*). Hence Husserl provides an example of fulfilment of volition. Judgment means “it is so” and volition “it should be so”, that is the difference between judgment and volition. But will cannot express what it “means”, and this reveals its dependence. Volition has to be fulfilled with logical (cognitive) intentions and, as a result, judgment of policy (“it should be so”) arises which is not a judgment or volition. Logical reason intervenes in the sphere of practical life (here, in the sphere of making volition decisions), it provides will with sight and provides a person with the possibility to understand what she wants.

Conception of motivation and transfer of formal logical principles into ethics

In defining the specificity of value cognition, Husserl is guided by the conception of *motivation*. Husserl transfers the logical principle according to which the conclusion should be inferred from the premises to the axiological sphere and formulates the principle of interrelation of motivations and values, analogous to the logical principle: “Volition (*Willen*) of the means is practically motivated by volition of the presuppositions. Motivation of assertions corresponds here to volitions ... which are subject to the rules of practical reasonability” (Husserl 1988: 70f). Accordingly, it is the conception of value basis (*Wertgründe*) which is the analogue, in the axiological sphere, of the concept of logical premises, and it is the concept of value consequences (*Wertfolge*) which is the analogue of logical corollaries.

Husserl emphasises the internal interrelation and mutual entwining of theoretical (logical) and practical (axiological) principles of inference. If one is convinced that *A* is valuable, one will no longer question whether *A* is valuable or not. On this basis, Husserl advances the thesis about “reasonable consistency” according to which “consistency connects the intellectual sphere with emotional spheres; theoretical reason and value-judgement reason are everywhere entwined with each other” (Husserl 1988: 72).

Husserl also substantiates parallelism with the basic principles of formal logic. The axiological analogue of the *principle of contradiction* reads: “If *A* is a positive value,

then *A* is not a negative value. If *A* is a negative value, then *A* is not a positive value...” (Husserl 1988: 81). At the same time, Husserl points out that in the sphere of axiology “the principle of non-contradiction” is of relative (not absolute) significance, since what is of no value in some respect can be of certain value in another (in contrast to this, an assertion is true or false in the absolute sense). Therefore, in order to speak about the “contradictory” character of reciprocal exclusiveness of values, it is necessary to introduce an additional condition of motivation: “It would be anti-reasonable, axiologically contradictory to rejoice at the fact that *S* is *p* and, for the same motives, to grieve over the fact that *S* is *p*” (*ibid.*). Simple transfer of the *tertium non datur* principle to the sphere of axiology is also impossible, since, in the sphere of axiology, there is a “tertium” not existing in the theoretical sphere which is neutral in the value aspect and which Husserl names “adiaphoric” (*adiaphora*). Thus, in the case of value judgements the *tertium non datur* principle works on the condition only that one excludes the possibility of *adiaphora* in the first place. In this connection, Husserl introduces a new axiological principle – *quartum non datur*: “If *M* is some matter, then one of the three will be true (and is always true within any axiological region): either *M* is a matter of positive value, or *M* is a matter of negative value, or it is valueless” (Husserl 1988: 88). *Quartum non datur est*. With the fact that there are three, and only three, classes of axiological judgements, the specific formulation of the axiological *principle of identity* is also connected: “If *A* is a value, then it is not a non-value, and, simultaneously, it is not an *adiaphora*” (Husserl 1988: 85).

Phenomenology of the Will

In the third section of the 1914 lectures on ethics, Husserl analyses the features of will acts. Although Husserl analysed volition in the context of developing *scientific ethics* and *formal axiology*, nevertheless the principles of volition have the kind of autonomy that allows us to speak about a separate and independent discipline – *phenomenology of the will*.

There is age-old polemics in traditional philosophy about the distinction criteria of the phenomenon of human acting and how to understand the enigma of human life as a whole: whether the guiding criterion is reason or will. Husserl advances the thesis about the same primordially of reason and will making up parallelism between modalities of judgment and volition. Unlike Schopenhauer², he does not endue the will with autarky but also does not analyse it merely from the psychological point of view. Husserl characterises the will in two aspects: (1) as the experience of the synthesis of reason and volition, and (2) as a particular volitional foundation of intentional acts. He distinguishes between (1) “volition in the broadest sense” (*doxa*), (2) “volition in the usual narrow sense”, implying the implementation of what is willed, and (3) “negative volition” (Husserl 1988: 103). This distinction does not mean three different modes of existence, but three aspects which do not have isolate existence, and are entwined with each other in the behaviour of an acting person.

In § 15 of Husserl’s lectures we can find a characterisation of “volition in

the usual narrow sense” in two aspects: (1) as the will to act, which is actually realised here and now, and (2) as a will to resolve, intended to future creation, and, consequently, presupposing extension in time. The will is characterised by “creative intention” (*schöpferische Intention*) and is implemented in the will to act. The will to resolve precedes and is the basis of the will to act. Both visions of the will are just two aspects of one phenomenon, which creates the essential core of each volition assertion (judgment), and Husserl calls it “Let be!” (*Es werde!*). The creative nature of volition judgment means that volition judgment, on the one hand, is “actually creative”, is carried out here and now, currently during “true acting”, and, on the other hand, intended to future creation (Husserl 1988, 107f, 109). This is the reason for the temporal nature of volition and necessity of the phenomenological analysis of time as an essential part of phenomenology of will.

Creative assertion of the will is of a temporal nature in which two fields can be singled out: the creative beginning of an action (actual, direct, “now”) and the final point that implies aiming at the future result. Therefore, anything that has been already created exists in a horizon perceived as “the will horizon” and is characterised by the “anticipated will continuity” (Husserl 1988: 110). Here the “will continuum” expanded between these two points cannot be understood as a sequence of transitions from one “now” to another “now”. Rather, the will continuum does not *pass* but *springs from* “now” as from the beginning of the person’s own will manifestation and creative self-affirmation (*fiat*) (Husserl 1988: 111). Thus, the decisive role in this case belongs to the personality or to the will manifestation of “an ethical subject” who

² Regarding the influence of Schopenhauer’s theory of the will upon Husserl’s phenomenology of the will, see Schuhmann 1988.

is placed into the temporal horizon too – the horizon of the actions that have already been performed and are to be performed in the future.

This predetermines transformations of intentionality. While in the case of cognitive (objectivising) acts the intention of signification is “being directed at something”, the will “is implemented creatively at any now-phase of the process and is ‘deliberately’ directed at the rest of the process as at what should be *implemented*” (*ibid.*). The second essential difference between the theoretical-cognitive conception of intentionality and the will conception is a new understanding of obviousness in the sphere of will acts and emotional acts: “an analogue of obviousness is the right love that has been characterized as the right” (Husserl 1988: 344). If that is the case, then there emerges the question as to the criteria of correctness and incorrectness of love. In the 1908–1914 lectures Husserl does not provide a clear answer to this question characterising love as “a mystery”. Nevertheless, despite the non-explicit conception of love in the 1908-9 lectures, in this case we can find a direction to the way in which it is possible to achieve clarity: hereafter (in the context of the theory of personality and intersubjectivity) Husserl analyses the phenomenon of love as intrinsic or “true life” (*ibid.*). And, finally, the third distinctive point is the specific role of the acting person. It has already been mentioned above that *the source (fiat)* of creative assertion is the creative acting person. *The final result* of activity cannot be definitely predetermined as well, because the outcome is in many ways dependent on the interests and preferences of the person as well as on the particular situation in which the person implements the planned action. The actor

is not an anonymous autonomous subject but a person entwined into the surrounding world, into relations with other acting persons. Therefore, in the case of the “volition subject” and the “acting person”, Husserl prefers to speak not about intentionality but about motivation and “interpersonal motivation” (Husserl 1991: § 56).

The cornerstone of the project of scientific logic is the question about the legitimacy of categorical imperative put forward by Immanuel Kant (Husserl 1988: 137). Husserl analyses this issue in connection with the issue of choice, correlative to it, formulating the so-called *principle of absorption*: “in the case of any choice the better absorbs the good and the best absorbs the rest from what in itself and for itself stands as that which is worthy of positive evaluation” (Husserl 1988: 136). Based on this principle, it can be said that in Husserl’s ethics there is no place for the “categorical imperative”, since what is significant in absorption is always only a “relative obligation”. However, there are two dangers which are connected with it, in the first place: (1) a possibility of random choice, and (2) regress into infinity and, as a consequence, relativisation of the value of the good. Husserl attempts to remove the threat of relativism by stating an *a priori* inalterability of matter, i.e., of “the idea” of the best good and the principles (Husserl 1988: 137). However, thereby he introduces an analogue of the absolute value (correspondingly, the “absolute obligation”) – it is the requirement that the acting subject should choose the best from all the good things available in one situation or another. Thus, Husserl refutes the categorical imperative, on the one hand, but agrees with Kant, on the other hand. He agrees with Kant in stat-

ing, similarly to him, an “ideal principle”, or a formal principle, which is the universal criterion of the right-wrong choice in a certain practical situation (Husserl 1988: 138). Husserl disagrees with Kant since he states that the conception of the “objective value” is determined by a material *a priori* which depends on a certain factual situation which can be specified or foreseen in a formal principle in no way. Taking a decision in a certain situation requires from the active subject not so much obeying the imperative as creativity and ability to make the best choice in that situation. Hence Husserl, alongside with the conception of *reasonable volition*, which is analogous to Kant’s conception, introduces the conception of *insightful volition (einsichtiges Willen)*, which purpose is to reconcile the formal and the material aspects in axiology. The formal ethical requirement is addressed to the reason of the acting subject who cannot act without reflections but always “weighs all pros and contras” (Husserl 1988: 142). However, it is effective only when it becomes a habitus, when it becomes insightful volition (Husserl 1988: 356f). In the final analysis, Husserl arrives at his own formulation of *the categorical imperative*: “Will and act reasonably! If your volition is right, it nevertheless is not valuable yet; it is only insightful volition which is valuable” (Husserl 1988: 153).

Conclusion

The idea of the parallelism between logic and ethics is not followed through by Husserl: “logical reason” *sensu stricto* is not parallel to practical reason, but is a pattern of his speculative constructions. On the other hand, for Husserl, it is also obvious that with axiological norms and axioms it

is impossible to reach the same unambiguity as in logic, since the “good” is factual, relative and situational. The conception of the acting subject also has the ambivalent and antinomic nature. The conception of volition motivation permits us to speculate about the acting subject, who is included in the broadest event context of outworld, which cannot be logically formalised. So, the subject understood does not only change the world, but changes herself constantly as well aiming to achieve the situational equilibrium between intellectual and emotional acts. The contextuality of motivations implies “spontaneity” and creativity of the acting subject, which can not be “cuff” in pure and static formal principles as it is not possible to predict the whole spectrum of living situations. On the other hand, when Husserl speaks about the implemented choice of the “best good”, establishes the canon of *a priori* axiological principles, and defines the features of formal axiology, he aims, at best, to determine and simplify this context of outworld and strictly determine the acting field of the subject. Due to this, the criteria of that defining and simplifying are not thematised and explicated by Husserl, but they are supposed as necessary for the constitution of the cognition subject and pure logic. This leads us to the key question about the conceptual and methodical interrelation between Husserl’s conception of theoretical reason (transcendent phenomenology) and the idea of practical reason (practical philosophy). In other words, when one speculates about the project of practical philosophy and about the possibility to change the existing conceptions of Husserl’s phenomenology (Cf. Spahn 1996: 13), the decisive role belongs to the question of how independent is Husserl

from the conception and methodological premises of transcendental phenomenology in his comprehension of the ethical issues

and elaboration of the idea of practical reason – or, conversely, how dependent he is on those premises.

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HUSSERLIO FENOMENOLOGIJA IR PRAKTINIS PROTAS

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Santrauka. Straipsnyje analizuojama ankstyvoji Husserlio veiksmo teorija ir dvi jos formos – mokslo etika ir vertybių teorija bei valios fenomenologija. Autorius sutelkia dėmesį į dvi problemas: logikos ir etikos paralelizmo klausimą bei klausimą, kiek Husserlio etinių problemų ir praktinio proto idėjos plėtotė yra nepriklausoma nuo transcendentalinės fenomenologijos koncepcijos ir metodologinių prielaidų, arba atvirkščiai – kiek ji nuo tų prielaidų yra priklausoma.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: logikos ir etikos paralelizmas, praktinis protas, gyvenamasis pasaulis, mokslo etika, formalioji aksiologija

Įteikta 2014 m. rugpjūčio 13 d.